Nick Sargent Utah's winter outdoor industry needs more climate action from PacifiCorp

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Body

As the president of Snowsports Industries America (SIA), it is my responsibility to protect and strengthen our industry for the future. As the winter outdoor industry's trade association, we represent over 500 winter sports gear manufacturers, retailers, sales reps and resorts and a network of over 30,000 winter outdoor industry professionals, many of whom are based here in Utah. The strength of our industry, our communities, and our livelihoods all depend on consistent winter seasons and a stable ecosystem.

Climate change poses a material threat to Utah's $1.55 billion winter outdoor industry, our jobs, and our mountain communities like Park City, where I live and where local businesses rely on the revenue that winter tourism generates.

I am no longer thinking about a changing climate as something that is going to happen; it's here, and I am seeing the impacts of climate change every day. From summers of historic droughts that have fueled devastating wildfires across our state and dried up the rivers that provide our fresh water and recreational opportunities, to winters that have become shorter, warmer, and more variable, climate change is approaching us from all directions, every season. It's an omnipresent threat that has become our industry's top concern and therefore, we must address this issue at the speed and scale that it demands.

While the integrated resource plan that PacifiCorp/Rocky Mountain Power announced in September includes important steps toward adding renewable energy resources and storage that will help reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change, it concerns me that the utility intends to keep fossil fuel generation in the years ahead, with some of its coal plants running well past 2030.

The science is clear. The world's top scientists say that to avoid catastrophic climate change, we must reduce economy-wide emissions at least 50% by 2030 and achieve complete decarbonization by 2050. The most cost-effective way to decrease those emissions is to accelerate reductions in the power sector, where proven, deployable technology already exists. Greenhouse gas pollution from the power sector must decline at least 80% by 2030 compared to 2005 levels and ideally achieve net-zero emissions by 2035 to support decarbonizing the rest of the economy.

I applaud PacifiCorp for its commitment to adding more renewable energy sources in the next few years. It's a good business decision as clean, renewable energy is now the most cost-effective form of electricity generation across the West. But getting serious about addressing climate change means decreasing our dependence on fossil fuels, not just continuing fossil fuel generation well past 2030.

Legislation passed in Oregon and Washington requires coal-fired power to be removed from electricity rates in those states by 2030. This means that to cover the costs of operating its aging coal fleet, PacifiCorp in the years ahead may be asking the eastern states it serves-Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming-to take on the costs of those carbon-emitting coal plants that Oregon and Washington have rejected. This could make renewable energy goals like those

of Park City much more difficult and expensive to achieve, and it would also saddle Utahns with even more coal-related financial risks. Increasing Utah's dependence on coal is moving in the opposite direction of where we need to be heading. This will have truly devastating environmental and economic consequences for our industry and the places we love.

We are out of time. And Utah's winter outdoor industry knows this all too well. We understand the need to reduce our emissions and elevate our industry's collective voice on climate policy, but no matter what we do, we can't solve the climate crisis without transforming our electricity grid to clean zero-emission energy. We need PacifiCorp to accelerate its clean energy commitment, and that starts by committing to end its fossil fuel generation no later than 2035.

Nick Sargent is president of Snowsports Industries America (SIA), the winter outdoor industry's Park City-based nonprofit, member-owned trade association, representing more than 500 winter outdoor suppliers, retailers, sales reps and resorts, and a network of over 30,000 winter outdoor industry professionals.

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